

November 30, 1995

TO: Members of the BW Working Group  
FROM: Jo Husbands

SUBJECT: Summary of Decisions from November 14th Conference Call

**REMINDER:** Our meeting is now rescheduled for Friday, January 19th.

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NOTE: I have not tried to summarize our whole conversation, just those portions related to specific decisions and projects.

1) **The current political climate.**

a) Export controls. In the course of the discussion, Josh expressed concern that current worries about the threat of BW proliferation or terrorism were sparking U.S. interest in increasing controls on the export of biological materials. He raised the question of whether a study of the problem would be helpful. John thought the idea was a good one because the U.S. government is still struggling with the export control issue and is having a hard time accepting the concept of increasing transparency and monitoring rather than trying to control the flow of technology in order to deny access. John suggested that a workshop leading to a cogent policy memo would be the best approach. Josh, however, thought a full study, with 8-10 months of effort, including hearings to get industry views, would be needed.

**Decisions/Tasks:** Jo will contact Kyle Olson, among others, to get a sense of whether industry/trade associations would be interested in such a study. She will also contact the Royal Society about whether they have an interest in this topic, and FAS to see what work, if any, they are currently doing on export controls. Finally, it might be worthwhile to have conversations with interested government officials to see if there were any interest in such a study as part of broader work on export control policy.

b) Public trust and control issues. Following a comment from Josh, the Group discussed the apparent increase in public anxiety about the trustworthiness of scientists, which could also increase efforts at controls on research activity. There was general agreement that current regulations are adequate; the issue is ensuring implementation and compliance.

**Decisions/Tasks:** If Josh talks with Bruce Alberts about the Inter-Academy Panel (see below), he may use this opportunity to raise the issue with him, since this is a problem in which the Academy should be interested.

**2) BW Conversion Assistance.**

a) Status of proposed Group project. John reported that he and Josh have had several conversations with Harold Smith and Ash Carter about getting DOD to ask the Academy to undertake the design of a systematic conversion assistance effort for former BW facilities. Matt emphasized the importance of targeting facilities in order to eventually create a network that enmeshes these labs and their personnel in activities that leads to regular contact and the presence of Westerners on site. Both John and Josh expressed considerable confidence that the request would be made, but it appears that nothing will be immediately forthcoming. [NOTE: Harold Smith has since called and invited John to lunch on January 23rd for a status report. It is not clear if anything would happen in the meantime.]

**Decisions/Tasks.** Josh and John will keep in touch with the relevant actors in DOD to remind them of the need for action. Josh will let DOD know that there is serious interest in the smallpox project that he and Sandakhchiev have discussed off and on for over a year. [NOTE: To assist John, Jo has spoken with Bob, Alex, and Tom to get material for a memo citing current problems, such as Venezuelan equine encephalitis and ebola, on which the Russians have important knowledge to contribute. John believes this would be helpful for those trying to press our case internally.]

b) ISTC-related issues. Anne Harrington had sent Jo a copy of draft agenda for an ISTC-sponsored workshop in Pokrov, on which she said she wanted our advice.

**Decisions/Tasks.** Jo will contact Anne to find out what she wants from us and then get in touch with individuals as needed. [NOTE: Anne no longer feels the need for our advice, but she did provide a copy of the latest agenda, which is being sent to you as part of another package. People are excited because, for the first time, the participants are supposed to include 10-12 people from MOD facilities.]

**3) Broader issues/potential new activities.**

a) Sustaining an international consensus on the unacceptability of BW use. The Group agreed that there was not much it could do to affect government policy directly to encourage a forceful response to any use or alleged use of BW. However, it might be able to help mobilize professional communities in other countries to the need to maintain the so-far successful global taboo on BW use. Josh wondered if it would be possible to get the equivalent of the statement on population issues that a large number of academies of science released in advance of the UN Population conference in Cairo. John Boright described the new Inter-Academy Panel on International Issues (IAP), which has been created to provide a vehicle for cooperation and joint action by academies. The Panel oversight group will meet in January, where the focus will be on its current work on problems of "megacities" in advance of the UN Habitat conference.

**Decisions/Tasks.** John Boright will send Josh background information on the Inter-Academy Panel, after which Josh will try to reach Bruce Alberts about raising the issue when the IAP meets in January.

b) Threat of BW terrorism. Josh expressed the view that since the signing of Presidential Decision Directive 39 last spring, considerable progress had been made in getting the government organized to address the threat. He believes the primary problem now is getting funding from Congress, where Frank Young's budget request was slashed, and that he was not sure what the Group could contribute to that problem. DOD, particularly Richard Danzig and Adm. William Owens are also very aware of the problem and trying to respond, albeit initially only for DOD installations.

Tom commented that he agreed with Bob Chanock that human monoclonal antibodies offered a real prospect of responding -- the opportunity to intervene after use to save people distinguishes BW from other terrorist threats. But the costs of bringing them to full FDA-approved readiness would involve hundreds of millions of dollars. Chanock commented that the research effort, which must come first, did not require a tremendous amount of money. But it is very important to get such a research effort started.

This is an issue where the science is not contested, but where sufficient attention and resources are not being given to the problem -- and that shapes what the Academy might do to help. The Group agreed that work on human monoclonal antibodies could be part of any cooperative effort with the Russians, and that they would have a good deal to contribute.

**Decisions/Tasks.** What we do next depends in considerable measure on whether DOD does ask us to undertake a major planning effort. Jo will find out if internal planning funds might be available to explore what the Group could do on both the issue of defenses and on the issue of assistance for the Russians.